The Joy o' Life

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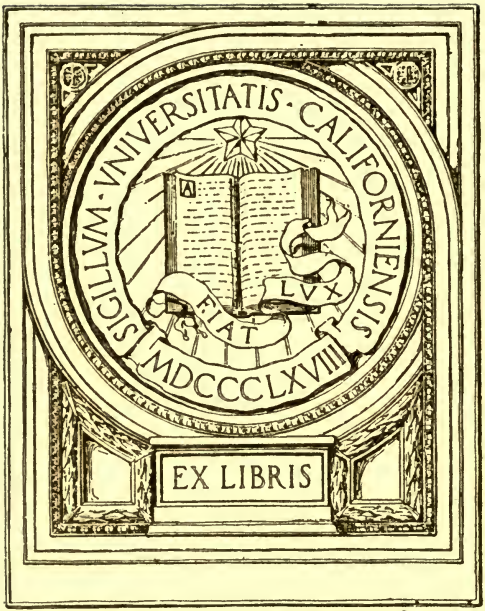
Theodosia Garrison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THE JOY O' LIFE

The Joy o' Life

and other Poems

BY

Theodosia Garrison

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TO J. G.

3C144

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THE JOY O' LIFE

OH, the Joy o' Life goes singing through the highway,
Oh, the Joy o' Life goes swinging through the green,
And the form of her is slight as a crescent moon at night
And her face is some strange flower none hath seen.
She beckoned me and what could I but follow?
(Oh, I have seen the glamour of her eyes!)
Through the winding o' the ways, through the hundred nights and days
Must I follow where she lures me woman-wise.

My plough — I left it idle in the furrow —
My harvest lies for other eyes to scan,
For it's fare ye well to loam, to hearthstone and to home
When the Joy o' Life is calling to a man.

Oh, the Joy o' Life she calls me from the valley,
Oh, the Joy o' Life, she hails me from the height,
And her voice is like the thrill of the thrush when noon is still
And her laughter is the lilting of delight.
I follow through the sunshine and the moonshine —
(Oh, I have seen the waving of her hand!)
In the paths that know the fleet, flying touches of her feet
At the music of her mocking of command.

My friend — I left him fasting at my threshold —
My sweetheart is another man's to wife,
For it's fare ye well my own, and it's laugh and turn alone
When a man has heard the voice of Joy o' Life.

Oh, the Joy o' Life she ever flies before me,
Oh, the Joy o' Life, she may not turn or wait,
But the day must dawn at last when the distances are passed
And the heart of me is leaping to its mate.
I have wooed her with the strength of my pursuing —
(Oh, I shall know the sweetness of her mouth!)
And I may not faint or pine till her hand hath closed in mine
Like the touch of silvern water in the drouth.

My dead — I left them sleeping in the churchyard —
My gods I thrust aside to bless or ban,
For it's fare ye well and hie, and it's follow till ye die
When the Joy o' Life is calling to a man.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

OH, the road lies green behind us like a narrow winding river —
May bloom and rose bloom and whisper o' the wind —
Sunbeams spilled along the path like arrows from a quiver —
Nay, we must press on, sweetheart, and never look behind.
Time is left and little time for tender words and kisses,
A little round o' purple nights, a round of golden days,
Never was a gypsying so sweet a one as this is —
We are nearing to the parting of the ways.

When at first we took the road the crescent moon was slender,
Like a folded lily-bud asway on curving stem;
Night and night she spread her leaves until she flashed in splendour,
Night and night her petals drooped the while we noted them.
Now, before the moon is dead, let us laugh together —
Still there lies a little way and time to kiss and praise;
(Oh, your hand lies light in mine as little curled white feather) —
We are nearing to the parting of the ways.

Oh, the glory of the days that we two have roved in,—
Green wood and deep wood and low wind of the South —
Oh, the tenderness of nights that we two have loved in —
Soft arms and warm arms, and kisses of your mouth;
Would that there were turning back to the path's beginning,
Back of us the tender light, all before the haze;
Let our feet be slow, sweetheart, the goal is weary winning —
We are nearing to the parting of the ways.

THE GUESTS OF SLEEP

SLEEP at the Inn o' Dreams —
  A kindly host he waits,
And all night long a goodly throng
  Comes softly through his gates.

A varied company —
  Scholar and clown and king,
Or prince or priest, or great or least,
  He gives them welcoming.

For each he fills the cup
  Where poppy petals swim,
Wherefrom each guest at his behest
  Drinks deeply, toasting him.

And old men drink of youth,
  And sad men of delight,
And weary men drink deep again
  The pulsing wine of might.

And poets drink of song,
  But best and Oh, most sweet,
Above that brim where poppies swim
  The lips of lovers meet.

Sleep at the Inn o' Dreams —
  A kindly host he waits,
And all night long a goodly throng
  Comes softly through his gates.

THE MEMORIES OF PIERROT

THERE was a morning when the April sun
  Tapped with soft fingers at the attic pane
  And fell on Pierrette's face like golden rain
That roused her ere her happy sleep was done.
And even so she woke him in this wise —
  Pierrot, who through his slumbers felt the stir
Of gold hair like shed sunbeams on his eyes,
  And so waked smiling from a dream of her.

He heard her laugh before he saw her face —
  She danced beside him at the carnival,
  Mirth-mad and masked, with jests for one and all,
A wind-swayed rose, a slender flame of grace;
And through his pleadings, plaintive, whimsical,
  Still she denied his eyes their right to see,
  And mocked his patience, and then, suddenly,
Lifted her hand and let the velvet fall.
Only a little moment — then again
  Merry and masked she bade new revels start;
  But Pierrot stood in silence, and his heart
Thrilled with such ecstasy it stung like pain.

There was a day they parted angrily —
  The day she tossed the red rose from her hair
  Into another's hand, and did not care,
But leaned and laughed where Pierrot frowned to see.
And all alone he climbed the creaking stair
  And sat in silence and with hidden face

While the night fell, and all the lonely place
Yearned for her loveliness who was not there.
So light her hand upon the swinging door
He might not guess whose coming threw it wide;
So light her footstep as she sought his side
It fell as soft as moonlight on the floor.
Then brokenly, like music in his ears,
One sobbed his name, and as their kisses met
He thrilled and trembled, for her eyes were wet —
That was the night when first he knew her tears.

They went a-Maying when the Spring was new,
Leaving the noisy city streets behind,
But all the violets they bent to find
Hid shamed because her blue eyes were more blue.
And all the birds were mute the forest through,
And hushed their music with a jealous wit,
Knowing her laughter was more exquisite
And sweeter than the sweetest song they knew.

Alone he came to her and closed the door.
The pitiful, new neatness of the room
Was like a stranger's frown, and through the gloom,
Each one an anguish and a memory,
Ghost-like the garments that she one day wore
Stirred as he passed them with their old perfume.
Her caged bird called him from the window-sill;
Still bloomed the little pot of mignonette
Upon the casement, all unwithered yet,
That seemed to give him welcome, and his heart

Broke newly as he listened — for how still,
  How still she lay who last night was Pierrette!
All night he knelt beside her till at last
  The far dawn lifted like white smoke upcurled;
  Then from her hand as from a blossom furled,
  He drew the crucifix, and in its place
Put roses upon roses, and so passed
  Dry-eyed and silent to the empty world.

A BALLAD OF HALLOWE'EN

ALL night the wild wind on the heath
Whistled its song of vague alarms;
All night in some mad dance of death
The poplars tossed their naked arms.

Mignon Isa hath left her bed
And bared her shoulders to the blast;
The long procession of the dead
Stared at her as it passed.

"Oh, there, methinks, my mother smiled,
And there my father walks forlorn,
And there the little nameless child
That was the parish scorn.

"And there my olden comrades move,
And there my sister smiles apart,
But nowhere is the fair, false love
That bent and broke my heart.

"Oh, false in life, oh, false in death,
Wherever thy mad spirit be,
Could it not come this night," she saith,
"To keep a tryst with me!"

Mignon Isa hath turned alone,
Bitter the pain and long the years;
The moonlight on the cold gravestone
Was warmer than her tears.

A BALLAD OF HALLOWE'EN

All night the wild wind on the heath
Whistled its song of vague alarms;
All night in some mad dance of death
The poplars tossed their naked arms.

I THOUGHT OF LOVE

I THOUGHT of Love (Ah, very long ago!)
  As a great force, an all-compelling might,
  A white flame that made mid-day of the night,
A swift bewildering, a splendid blow.
I thought of him as of some wondrous foe
  Armed by the gods with menace and delight
  To sway, to startle and to conquer quite,
The too rebellious heart that dared him so.
Ah, that was long ago. To-day, grown old,
  I think of Love as sick men think of sleep,
    Yea, as a man distracted thinks of rest
And tenderness of woman that may fold
  Close arms about his wounds and bid him weep
    Weakly and unashamed upon her breast.

THE THOUGHT

WHY, once the very thought of him was vital
As is some crimson rose
Flaming, defiant in a quiet garden
Among pale lily blows.

And yet to-day the thought of him is only
A rose closed in a book —
A lifeless thing long shut between dull pages
Where she forgets to look.

And yet I think an old love-thought forgotten
Somewhere not wholly dies.
It may be of such roses angels weave us
The wreaths of Paradise.

THE CYNIC

I SAY it to comfort me over and over,
  Having a querulous heart to beguile,
Never had woman a tenderer lover —
  For a little while.

Oh, there never were eyes more eager to read her
  In her saddest mood or her moments gay,
Oh, there never were hands more strong to lead her —
  For a little way.

There never were loftier promises given
  Of love that should guard her the ages through,
As great, enduring and steadfast as Heaven —
  For a week or two.

Well, end as it does, I have had it, known it,
  For this shall I turn me to weep or pray?
Nay, rather I laugh that I thought to own it
  For more than a day.

THE MOTHER

AM I not kin to those high souls, elate,
Who dreamed brave dreams too wonderful and great
For any telling? Yea, I too have been
As near to God as poet, seer and saint,
And through glad tears his mysteries have seen,
Seeing I sat as humble women may
And sewed on little garments day by day.

They who have known joy, flawless and complete —
Am I not one of them, whose joy was sweet
Beyond the bliss of lovers? Nay, above
The calm of martyrs crowned, my joy hath been —
The perfect crowning of perfected love,
Seeing that one glad day against my breast
The wonder of a little head was pressed.

Am I not sister unto them whose tears
All men have venerated through the years?
There is no sorrow in a world too wide
I may not know and feel and understand.
Mine, mine the anguish of the Crucified,
The heart of Mary — seeing on a day
I kissed a child's dead face and turned away.

THE FAILURES

WE who have failed, remember this of us —
Oh you, whose hands have grasped the luminous
And lovely thing that is your soul's desired,
Though once we fell and blundered on the way,
Though now we turn shamed faces from the day,
Remember this — that once we too aspired.

We who have failed through weakness or surmise,
Be gentle with us if we turn our eyes
Sometimes from sight of those victorious,
Crowned and exultant on the farthest height,
Seeing that once we watched our arms by night,
Seeing that once we dreamed to triumph thus.

We who have failed in life and love and task,
Surely not overmuch this gift we ask.
Be not too scornful, you, whose glorious,
Undaunted souls pressed on through flood and fire,
Of those too weak to grasp a great desire.
We who have failed, remember this of us.

THE TRUTH

THAT glorious flame that was my youth
Is burnt to ashes, flung
And scattered, and I know the truth —
I who one day was young.

Wisdom is mine my peers among,
No craft my skill defies;
I hear beyond the flattering tongue
And see beyond surmise.

And this my wisdom — I grown wise
Would toss it all in fee
For one of Youth's delicious lies
That one day cheated me.

For this is wisdom's worth — to see
That ignorance was fair,
And more than Truth is Comedy
With rose leaves on her hair.

THE DOOR

BETWEEN us stands the closed door of your grief.
Oh, my Belovèd, is this thing well done?
What part have I with Summer and with Sun
Since you deny them to your heart's relief?
Was I Life's jester then and nothing more?
Open the door!

Think you I walk with gladness while afar
You sit alone with sorrow? Nay, not so.
There is no tear you shed I do not know,
No wound you feel but I too bear its scar —
May I not stand beside you then, the less
Wounded by knowledge of your loneliness?

Know this, that I, a watcher in the night,
Would find no word to censure or complain
Could I but see upon your window pane
The glow of hearth-flame and of candle-light.
So might I turn, who now may only wait
Knowing you sit in darkness — desolate.

Oh, my Belovèd, is this thing well done?
Is Love the veriest servant of your years
Unworthy to be comrade of your tears?
Was mirth alone the bond that made us one?
Then to the clown if Love be king no more —
Open the door!

THE SEVEN SONGS OF PENITENCE

I

LONG since I wounded him I love the best,
And all that night my pillow knew no rest;
  And in the morning I arose, and lo!
The wound I gave him showed on mine own breast!
  Ah, then I knew how terrible the blow.

II

Within a dream one night I spake to thee,
"What is this road of thorns and misery
  That stretches from my dwelling to thy door?"
And thou, "The road that leads thee back to me."
    Yet I will walk it steadfastly, O friend,
  What though my feet be bleeding and most sore,
    So thou shalt bind them for me at the end!

III

I sent my longing for thee like a bird
To sing without thy door a certain word,
  The word of penitence most exquisite;
    And weary in the morning it returned
And said, "Against his pane all night unheard
  I beat my wings, and when the red dawn burned
    One drew the casement close and fastened it."

IV

Belovèd, are the tears I shed for thee
Less than white roses thrown for majesty
  To trample on with cruel, careless feet?
Nay, pass not unregarding. Pause and see.
  Grown with such pain they surely must be sweet.

V

So much I missed my joy that everywhere
I sought it — by each corridor and stair;
  Yea, sought and called until my voice was dumb,
Yet all the while I knew it was not there,
  But waits within thy dwelling till I come.

VI

Sometimes at night within thy vacant chair
I bid another sit with face as fair,
  And laugh and drink red wine and force my heart
To braggart boasting that we do not care;
But when the gray dawn climbs its windy stair,
  Truthful I waken in the old grief's might
And cry unto the heart I bade forswear,
  "Ah, Liar, how we lied to Love last night!"

VII

The door of my poor house for thee is wide
As bridegroom swings the door that waits the bride,
  But my impatience is so great a thing
I may not light my lamps and wait inside,
    But I am gone to meet thee ere the day
  To cry to thee afar my welcoming.
    O friend, thy feet are slow upon the way!

DEFEATED

I FOUGHT a battle for my friend,
  Adroitly, skilfully,
Love lent me wit to thrust, defend —
  Herself mine enemy.

This way and that the battle went —
  Ah, we were wary foes!
Against my force of argument
  Her stubborn will uprose.

Her very weakness lent her strength,
  Yet strove I valiantly;
I conquered for my friend at length —
  Herself, the victory.

God knows a bloodless battlefield,
  Yet marvel, at the end
I lost what most I grieved to yield,
  For whom I fought — my friend.

WHILE MARY DREAMED

SHE dreamed her mother-dream — the kine
Stood silent in their stalls;
The moonlight through the stable door
Fell as white water falls,
And in its wake a shadow loomed
Cross-fashioned on the walls.
(*" How fair He is, this little son of mine!"*)

She dreamed her mother-dream — while yet
His head upon her breast
Had lain so short a time that scarce
It seemed its softness pressed
More than the thought of him who long
She yearned for, unpossessed.
(*" So wonderful, so strange, so sweet He is!"*)

She dreamed her mother-dream — in that
First hour of motherhood;
Afar men followed through the night
A star whose vast light stood
In highest Heaven, yet to her door
Dripped a red flame like blood.
(*" Oh, but His life is all of mine to hold!"*)

She dreamed her mother-dream — forgot
For that one hour's brief space
Was fear of Heaven's mysteries;
His hand against her face
Was as a white rose petal blown
Across her lips' soft grace.
(*" Oh, very beautiful His life shall be!"*)

WHILE MARY DREAMED

She dreamed her mother-dream — without
Came fast great kings and wise;
There crept no shadow through her bliss
Of olden prophecies;
So still He was — she might not know
The tears within His eyes.
(*" Strong shall He be and wise and well beloved!"*)

She dreamed her mother-dream — nor guessed
One wept who knew what pain
Would blur the anguish of her eyes,
That sought His own in vain
What time on Calvary's bleak height
Her heart should break in twain.
(*Like a great Cross the shadow on the wall!*)

THE GUEST DENIED

LOVE, I have given nothing, taken all.
I would indeed it had been otherwise,
That in your hands I let my bounty fall,
That at your feet I placed my sacrifice.
Seeing that now a suppliant's patient eyes
Seem ever in my own, too well I know
How one who busied in the day denies
A little child's caress and bids him go,
Turns in remorseful dreams to where he stands
With wistful, wondering eyes and empty hands.

I have denied you shelter; at my door
You cried in vain and I was deaf to you;
Yet, if some night I went all desolate,
Blown by strange winds adown the ways of Fate,
It is your threshold I should struggle to,
All confident of greeting, yea, all sure
Of eager arms, the welcome and the kiss
That holds all comforting. I know not why,
Yet I unfaithful dare to count you true
And am no surer of my saints than this.

I said to Love, "Of these my very tears
Behold I make a wine for thy delight.
Drink and be glad ere yet we part this night
Upon the threshold of the sundering years.
Yea, pledge me now in this my sorrow's sign."
Then Love, the while he turned from me, "Oh, child,
Sweeter were mirth of hearts impenitent —
The tears of pity make but bitter wine.
Better to go athirst," he said and smiled.
I wish he had not smiled so as he went.

THE LIVING SEA

HOW like the city is unto the sea:
The mighty wave of commerce breaks and beats
In restless surges through the noisy streets,
Swayed by the master tide of energy.
How many derelicts, long morn to morn,
Drift at the mercy of the wind and wave —
The flotsam and the jetsam of the pave —
Deserted, rudderless and tempest-torn.
Here move great argosies with gold and bales,
Staunch ships that dare the cunning currents' might,
And through their long procession dart the light,
Swift pleasure craft with sun-emblazoned sails.
Yet, am I minded only of one thing —
How much — how much these smiling waters drown.
Dear God, what wrecks this very day went down,
Unhailed, unsignalled and unsignalling!

THE LAST NIGHT

LOW moon behind the fishers' huts,
Long shadows on the sands,
And blown sea-spray that fogs the way —
(Love, let me find thy hands) —
The little lights o' the little town —
How far above they lie —
Like blurred stars set in a sky of jet
When the driven mist is high.

And to-morrow sails the fishing fleet
(Thine eyes — thine eyes to me!)
To-night alone is all our own —
(And Mary comfort thee!)

The long wave breaks like woman's sobs
Against the harboured ships;
Thy face is white as foam at night —
(Love, let me find thy lips);
What prayer is left for me to pray,
What vow is left unsaid
Man hath not sworn to life unborn
Or whispered to the dead?

And to-morrow sails the fishing fleet
(Thy mouth, thy mouth for me!)
To-night alone is all our own —
(And Mary comfort thee!)

KNOWLEDGE

I HAVE known sorrow — therefore I
May laugh with you, O friend, more merrily
  Than those who never sorrowed upon earth
  And know not laughter's worth.

I have known laughter — therefore I
May sorrow with you far more tenderly
  Than those who never knew how sad a thing
  Seems merriment to one heart's suffering.

THE TEARS OF HARLEQUIN

TO you he gave his laughter and his jest,
His words that of all words were merriest,
His glad, mad moments when the lights flared high
And his wild song outshrilled the plaudits' din.
For you that memory, but happier I —
I, who have known the tears of Harlequin.

Not mine those moments when the roses lay
Like red spilled wine on his triumphant way,
And shouts acclaimed him through the music's beat,
Above the voice of flute and violin.
But I have known his hour of sore defeat —
I — I have known the tears of Harlequin.

Light kisses and light words, they were not mine —
Poor perquisites of many a Columbine
Bought with his laughter, flattered by his jest;
But when despair broke through the painted grin,
His tortured face has fallen on my breast —
I — I have known the tears of Harlequin.

You weep for him, who look upon him dead,
That joy and jest and merriment are fled;
You weep for him, what time my eyes are dry,
Knowing what peace a weary soul may win
Stifled by too much masking — even I —
I, who have known the tears of Harlequin.

THE DREAM OF THE INNKEEPER'S WIFE

"Because there was no room for them in the inn."

THE childless mother rose from sleep
While yet there was no light,
And thrust aside the casement wide
With hands that shook from fright,
And leaned far out, and all about
A wild storm tore the night.

"Oh, but this dream hath pierced my heart;
Since I was lain in bed
Methought mine own dead little son,
Who never word hath said,
Stood at my knee and spake to me
As one uncomforted.

"'And, mother, oh, my mother,' he said,
'The night is dread and drear,
But housed and warm from hurt and storm
Ye sleep and know no fear,
Though in the wold one cried with cold
Ye did not hark nor hear.

"'And staunch and strong thy roof-tree is,
And filled my father's inn,
And every guest hath food and rest,
Yet this night through their din
Soft at thy door did one implore
Who entrance could not win.

" 'And, mother, oh, my mother,' he said,
'Go take the linen fine
Where one time I did softly lie,
The pillow that was mine,
For sick and sore on thy stable floor
One travails 'mongst the kine.'

" What was it of a star he spake?
My thoughts are shifting sand —
What else I heard fell strange and blurred,
I might not understand,
Yet did it seem not all a dream."
Her head dropped on her hand.

" Yea, of a child new-born he spake,
And this were truth, full fain
Were I to fleet through wind and sleet
To where my kine are lain,
If on my breast could there be pressed
A little head again.

" Nay, let me to my weary bed
And bid the thought go by."
She bent her head, the tears she shed
Fell swift and silently.
And while she wept a great star leapt
And flamed across the sky.

TIME

TIME is not made of months or days —
  Too well this truth I know;
Truly the hour of our first kiss
  Was centuries ago.

Close, close our parting followed it,
  Yet, reckon as men may,
Surely our anguish of farewell
  Was only yesterday.

BALLAD OF TWO SAINTS

THERE are two saints in Paradise
  Who spake of little earth,
And wonderful they are and wise
  And know their wisdom's worth,
Though the years they lived are cold, and blown
  Like ashes from a hearth.

And one, "Within a market-place
  I spake a certain word,
And hatred shone on every face,
  And they reviled who heard;
Yet spake I but on earth to-day
  How earth were thrilled and stirred!"

And one, "Unto a crownèd king
  I spake a word of fear,
And I was broken for this thing,
  Yea, scourged with scorn and jeer;
Yet spake I upon earth to-day
  How men would weep to hear!"

There are two saints in Paradise —
  Now if they came again
To walk before the careless eyes
  And listless heed of men,
I wonder if myself would go
  To kneel before them then.

BALLAD OF TWO SAINTS

There are two saints in Paradise —
  Dead men gave heed to them,
Yet if to-day in Heavenly guise
  They came to urge, condemn,
I wonder if myself would go
  To kiss their garments' hem.

THE GREEN INN

I SICKEN of men's company,
The crowded tavern's din,
Where all day long with oath and song
Sit they who entrance win,
So come I out from noise and rout
To rest in God's Green Inn.

Here none may mock an empty purse
Or ragged coat and poor,
But Silence waits within the gates
And Peace beside the door;
The weary guest is welcomest,
The richest pays no score.

The roof is high and arched and blue,
The floor is spread with pine;
On my four walls the sunlight falls
In golden flecks and fine;
And swift and fleet on noiseless feet
The Four Winds bring me wine.

Upon my board they set their store —
Great drinks mixed cunningly
Wherein the scent of furze is blent
With odour of the sea;
As from a cup I drink it up
To thrill the veins of me.

THE GREEN INN

It's I will sit in God's Green Inn
  Unvexed by man or ghost,
Yet ever fed and comforted,
  Companioned by mine host,
And watched at night by that white light
  High swung from coast to coast.

O you, who in the House of Strife
  Quarrel and game and sin,
Come out and see what cheer may be
  For starveling souls and thin
Who come at last from drought and fast
  To sit in God's Green Inn.

OH, my Heart,
To see before we die
The black clouds gather
Like midnight in the sky;
And watch the sea rein back
Her quivering, white-maned pack
That instant ere she flings them free
To thunder down the track.

Oh, my Heart,
But once to watch again
The East wind swinging
The stinging whips of rain;
To feel upon my face
The sharp, salt spray, and chase
The flying foam the combers fling
Like dust-clouds in their race.

Oh, my Heart,
To feel again the warm
Exultant youth within us
Go shouting with the storm,
But once — ere yet we turn
Where peaceful candles burn
Above the quiet chimney-seat
Where Age may rest — and yearn.

THE STARS

I SHALL walk bravely, bravely through my days.
Though love, that flaming torch that lighted me,
Has dropped away in darkness utterly,
I shall not falter on these unguessed ways,
Nor cry aloud for any spark to see
The forward step, lest, failing, I may be
A lost thing dazed and wailing in the haze.
For God, who gives each soul its certain light,
Will leave me not in darkness. For a space
I may go blindly where no guidance bars,
Yet, confident that in this torchless night,
Sudden shall break above my upturned face
The white, unchanging radiance of the stars.

THE UNATTAINED

I AM the lark, dear soul, and you
That Heaven he aspires to
  What time he sings.
Perchance if Heaven were nearer he
Had dared no height with melody
  Nor found his wings.

JOHN O' DREAMS

WHAT a world that was you planned us —
  Made of Summer and the sea,
Where the very wind that fanned us
  Drifted down from Arcady.
There where never Fate might sunder
  Rose your castle's shining beams.
Are you there to-day, I wonder,
  John o' Dreams?

That was but a trick Life played you
  When this planet knew your birth,
When she trapped your soul and made you
  One of us on dreary earth.
Since for you what fancies crossed it,
  Lures of alien stars and streams,
Have you found the path or lost it,
  John o' Dreams?

Just a little day in May-time
  Once I took the road with you;
Just a boy and girl in play-time
  With a vision to pursue.
I but glimpsed the glow around it
  Ere I turned, and yet it seems
Sometimes that you surely found it,
  John o' Dreams.

BETWEEN Life's gates of mystery
Throng solemn men and wise,
With scales to weigh the things that be,
To sift, reject and prize;
Long bowed beneath their wisdom's yoke
They ponder as is meet,
But we, we be the foolish folk
Who know the world is sweet.

Scholar and sage and fearful priest,
They trudge a dismal quest,
And marvel if the great be least
Or if the least be best;
Weighs each the worth of prince or hind
'Neath cowl and cap and hood,
But we, we be the foolish kind
Who know the world is good.

Within the dust of yesterdays
Their gaunt hands dip and stir;
They ponder on to-morrow's ways
And guess, distrust, aver;
Yesterday's fault, to-morrow's sin
Their withered lips repeat,
But we, we be the foolish kin
Who know to-day is sweet.

Oh, wise men of the sombre heart,
We be of little worth,
Who play our useless games apart
And take our joy of earth;

God's mirth when this His world awoke
  Ye have not understood —
We only heard, we foolish folk
  Who know that life is good.

STAINS

THE three ghosts on the lonesome road
Spake each to one another,
"Whence came that stain about your mouth
No lifted hand may cover?"
"From eating of forbidden fruit,
Brother, my brother."

The three ghosts on the sunless road
Spake each to one another,
"Whence came that red burn on your foot
No dust nor ash may cover?"
"I stamped a neighbour's hearth-flame out,
Brother, my brother."

The three ghosts on the windless road
Spake each to one another,
"Whence came that blood upon your hand
No other hand may cover?"
"From breaking of a woman's heart,
Brother, my brother."

"Yet on the earth clean men we walked,
Glutton and Thief and Lover;
White flesh and fair it hid our stains
That no man might discover."
"Naked the soul goes up to God,
Brother, my brother."

A PETITION

HERE among your poppy fields,
  Idleness, I pray you,
Let me wander lazy-eyed,
  Slow of thought and pace;
Empty-handed, light of heart,
  Eager to obey you,
To loaf and make a madrigal
  Tuned to fit your face.

Sick am I of strife and toil,
  I would seek your daisies,
Count the clouds and doze and dream
  Through drowsy afternoons.
Prithee, take me by the hand —
  Show me where the way is —
Let me change the clink of gold
  For your linnets' tunes.

Idleness! O Idleness,
  Smile a welcome for me;
Here's a minstrel out of voice,
  A weary heart to rest.
Soothe me with the pipes of Pan,
  Hum his music o'er me,
Rock me like a tired child
  Sleepy on your breast.

THE FIRST DAY

I SLEEP, who yesterday was tired,
I, who was very weary, rest,
I have forgot all things desired
Or, what were bad or what were best;
Wan roses lie upon my breast
And make a pillow for my head;
I know not am I banned or blest,
Who am most quiet — being dead.

Perchance to-morrow God may come
With awfulness of mouth and brow,
And bid me speak, who would be dumb,
My sins of yesterday; but now,
I have forgotten deed and vow,
I have been soothed and comforted,
And clothed with peace, I know not how,
Who am most happy — being dead.

A moment since one touched my hair —
There were hot tears upon my face;
To-morrow I may wake and care
And hunger for a lost embrace;
But now, one dim, delicious space,
My joys are done, my tears are shed;
I may lie still, who have the grace
Of all forgetting — being dead.

MARIONETTES

THE poor little, pitiful things —
  Each boasted a full control
  Of purpose and mind and soul;
    Each thought by his separate will
    He walked, danced, fell, stood still;
They never suspected the strings
  That dangled them here and there
  Through rapture, grief or despair,
    That held them in pairs and sets —
    The poor little marionettes.

When they went each night on the stage
  In the paste-board theatre's space,
  When they danced there, face to face,
    Each thought it wish of his own
    That brought them together, alone,
Each thought it her pride, his rage,
  The strength of each tinsel heart
  That forced them to scorn, to part
    In the light of the candle-jets —
    The poor little marionettes.

Each gave himself praise or blame,
  The poor little, pitiful things
  That never suspected the strings,
    That never guessed that they hung,
    Pirouetted or parted, swung

By the hand that planned the game;
Each flattered himself that he
Made his own, sole destiny,
His raptures, fears and regrets —
The poor little marionettes.

Ah well! Is it worth a sigh
From us who are sure of this:
That we won for ourselves love's kiss,
That we made our time and hour,
Grew joy from bud to flower?
We can laugh at them, you and I,
At the poor little, pitiful things
That never suspected the strings.
Mere shadows and silhouettes —
The poor little marionettes.

FLEURETTE

(An Epitaph)

THIS is she who was Fleurette —
  Something hardly woman, just
  One to smile at, scarce to trust;
    Something delicate, unstyled
    'Twixt a flower and a child,
Too exquisite to regret —
Fleurette.

This is she who was Fleurette —
  She whose laughter was as light
  As the moon-snow in the night;
    She whose heart was like a bird
    At a whisper thrilled and stirred,
Bird-like ready to forget —
Fleurette.

This is she who was Fleurette —
  She whose gay eyes never knew
  One harsh word to stain their blue;
    She whose lips were never lent
    Save to kiss or merriment,
Just for mirth and music set —
Fleurette.

This is she who was Fleurette —
  She who never woman-wise
  Carried love in her sweet eyes;

If she knew it — ah, who knows?
Can we ask love from a rose,
Pity from a violet?
Fleurette.

This is she who was Fleurette —
Flower-like she lived and died
One brief Springtime glorified;
Something far too fair to stay
For the coming of things gray
When the winds of Winter fret —
Fleurette.

This is she who was Fleurette —
To be sighed for, wished for, say
As a rose of yesterday;
Thought of 'twixt a smile and sigh,
Yet to-day, I wonder why,
As I smile my eyes are wet —
Fleurette.

DISTANCE

WE have clasped hands again, ah true,
We have no quarrel — that is done —
But nevermore beneath the sun
Comes back to me that friend I knew.

We shall break bread together; men
May mark no difference in our ways,
But only through my yesterdays
The friend I loved shall walk again.

We have forgiven — act and speech
Have proved it. Who shall then surmise
That space between our hearts that lies
Unbridged — beyond all sound or reach!

AFTERMATH

WHEN I am old and very tired,
A presence near a chimney-place,
With folded hands and quiet face,
Loving no more, no more desired,

God grant one memory to me
Shall ghost-like waver through the gloom,
And silent in a silent room
Come close to bear me company.

And those who pass perchance shall smile
With wondering eyes upon me bent.
" How still she sits, in what content,
Who lingers yet a little while."

They shall not guess, those over-wise,
How through the calm content of me
The face of that mad memory
Leans close and smiles within my eyes.

Until I feel in very truth
The girl-heart thrilling in my breast
What time upon my own are pressed
The passionate warm lips of Youth.

And they shall pity who but see
Dead ashes where the flames were bold,
A woman sad and very old
Who sits in silence patiently.

A SONG OF MARY

NOW wheresoe'er she came
The lilies like white flame
  Sprang up to meet her feet,
    And everywhere the stir,
  The mystic rhyme and beat
    Of music moved with her,
  (Oh, Virgin, meek and sweet!)
Long days before the morn
When the Lord Christ was born.

Whoe'er she looked upon,
The meanest, humblest one,
  Grew wonderful of face;
    The child she bent to kiss
  Of her diviner grace
    Stood with God's lips on his
  For that dear moment's space,
Long days before the morn
When the Lord Christ was born.

And wheresoe'er she went
The blossomed branches bent
  Above her head for shade,
    Knowing herself the Spring,
  Oh, maiden unafraid,
    Wherein the blossoming
  Of the whole world was laid,
Long days before the morn
When the Lord Christ was born.

THE APOSTLE

LOVE came so near to me that I
Felt the air stir as he went by;
And for a space his garment's hem
  Touched me, the while with rapid feet
He went his way. Am I not one of them,
  Therefore, to tell all men that Love is sweet?

Love came so near to me, awhile
I saw the wonder of his smile
Albeit he smiled not on me.
  I, who have seen his godlihood,
May not my voice 'mongst his apostles be
  To cry unto all men that Love is good?

Love came so near, so near to me,
That still I feel what bliss might be
Had he but paused a little space.
  Ah, longing that has no relief,
Am I not one of those whose tears have grace
  To cry unto all men that Love is grief?

A THANKSGIVING

LONG enough have I lived and sought to know the value
of things,
To know the gold from the tinsel, to judge the clowns from
the kings;
Love have I known and been glad of, joys of the earth have
been mine,
But to-day do I give my thanks for a rarer gift and fine.

For the friendship of true women, Lord, that hath been
since the world had breath,
Since a woman stood at a woman's side to comfort through
birth and death.
You have made us a bond of mirth and tears to last forever
and aye —
For the friendship of true women, Lord, take you my thanks
to-day.

Now much have I found to be glad of, much have I sor-
rowed for,
But naught is better to hear than foot of a friend at the
door;
And naught is better to feel than the touch of a sister hand
That says, " What are words between us — I know and may
understand."

For the friendship of true women, Lord, that hath lasted
since time began,
That is deeper far and finer far than the friendship of man
to man;

A THANKSGIVING

For the tie of a kinship wonderful that holds us as blood-bonds may —
For the friendship of true women, Lord, take you my thanks to-day.

Many the joys I have welcomed, many the joys that have passed,
But this is the good unfailing and this is the peace that shall last;
From love that dies and love that lies and love that must cling and sting
Back to the arms of our sisters we turn for our comforting.

For the friendship of true women, Lord, that hath been and ever shall be
Since a woman stood at a woman's side at the cross of Calvary;
For the tears we weep and the trusts we keep and the self-same prayers we pray —
For the friendship of true women, Lord, take you my thanks to-day.

THE TORCH

LORD, let me be the torch that springs to light
  And lives its life in one exultant flame,
One leap of living fire against the night
  Dropping to darkness even as it came.
For I have watched the smouldering of a soul
  Choked in the ashes that itself hath made,
Waiting the slow destruction of the whole,
  And turned from it, bewildered and afraid.

Light me with love — with hate — with all desire
  For that I may not reach, but let me burn
My little moment in pulsating fire
  Ere yet into the darkness I return;
Be it for guard, or menace, peace or sword,
  Make me thy torch to burn out swiftly, Lord.

DEFIANCE

YOU have hounded me well, my Lady Life,
  You have beaten and bruised and bent,
But ever I stayed me amid the strife
  To turn you a compliment.

You may cozen me there and trick me here —
  Your way with a soul long since —
But I'll mock before I'll plead, my dear,
  And I'll boast before I wince.

Why, think you to make me a captive cowed?
  That day that you slay, I swear
I will kiss my finger-tips to the crowd
  And jest with the headsman there.

THE WIFE

LET me be steadfast, Lord, nor pray you make
This heart of mine a weakling thing to break;
  Still let its strength endure unto that day
He pleads its sheltering for old love's sake
  When all the hounds of Hate are on his way.

I pray you, Lord, let not my laughter fail;
Set still the curve of it on lips grown pale,
  Seeing that one day he may crave their mirth
As men forespent may yearn through snow and gale
  The dear, accustomed warmth of home and hearth.

Give me all faith, dear Lord, that trusting so
I may not guess how futile is the glow
  Of this poor lamp — how vain the wide-flung door.
Feed me with patience, Lord, nor let me know
  How many starved on this brave hope before.

THE MARCH

I, WHO was very weary, turn again
To face the journey of the winding day,
To take my place amid the march of men
And be as brave as they.

To toil — to dare — to battle — to rejoice
Until again night yields us resting place;
And yet I have not heard my captain's voice
Nor ever seen his face.

Nor do I know wherefore we strive or when
The strife shall end. I only know each day
I take my place amid the march of men
And listen — and obey.

TO-MORROW

" TO-MORROW " and " To-morrow," so you say
To-morrow and your lips are mine to kiss.
Who knows but when that red sun goes his way
He may not light another day than this?

What if to-morrow in Death's borderland,
Two wistful, pulseless ghosts, we meet and say,
With groping hands that touch no other hand,
" God pity us — we wasted yesterday! "

BALLAD OF EVE'S RETURN

'TWAS Eve came back to Paradise
And paused without the gate;
The angels with the flaming swords
Stood each beside the grate —
And clean-white was one sword like love,
And one was red like hate.

The white hosts leaned from Heaven to see
The woman of first sin;
Above her head the burning blades
Crossed menacing and thin,
And lo! a great voice spake through space,
"My people, let her in!"

Down dropped the swords on either side,
The thrice-barred gate swung free;
Blossomed and bright and beckoning
Stirred sun-filled flower and tree,
But Eve stood still without the gate,
Nor wistfully spake she,

"Afar my strong man breaks the soil,
And as he toils he sings
That I may know that still his love
Grows with earth's growing things.
An I came in who else might lean
To greet his homecomings?

" And what to me were Paradise
And languid days of ease
Seeing the peace that springs from toil
Is lovelier than these,
What time, 'at evenfall we two
Rest 'neath our new-grown trees."

The thrice-barred gate swung free and wide —
Smiling she shook her head,
" An I came in what place would be
For one beside," she said,
" Who failing my two arms to-night
Would weep uncomforted.

" And what to me were Paradise
Since I have known the best —
My true mate's eyes within my eyes,
The man-child at my breast,
Their exquisite, dear need of me
That makes me wholly blest."

The thrice-barred gate swung free and wide
To show the sun-filled way;
The blossomed heights of Paradise
Lured her as live things may.
'Twas Eve who stood without the gate
And laughed and turned away.

BALLAD OF EVE'S RETURN

Aghast, amazed, the hosts of Heaven
Broke forth in 'wildered cries,
"Where, then, is that her punishment
Thou didst devise, Most Wise,
What time Thy vengeance drove her forth
Outcast from Paradise?"

Beneath the answering voice they bent
As wind-swayed forests move,
"My people, of this woman's word
Take ye the truth thereof;
Learn ye thus late her punishment
Came not of hate but love!

"Wiser than ye is she who guessed
My meaning over long;
Love cast her forth from Paradise —
Now when hath love wrought wrong?"

* * * * *

And suddenly the courts of Heaven
Thrilled with adoring song.

EXPERIENCE

LITTLE SISTER, if I told you of the way
Wherein my feet went straying yesterday,
If I warned you of the pitfalls and the snares,
Would you straight forgo your Maying for my prayers,
And, lest you too might wander, pause and stay?
Nay, not so —
Where other feet have gone, your feet must go.

Little Sister, if I showed without disguise
My thorn-pierced hands and wounded to your eyes,
Would you turn aside from roses warily
Lest you too feel the thorns no man may see?
Would you watch them bloom and beckon — and be wise?
Nay, not so —
You too must have your will where roses blow.

Little Sister, if I showed my heart to you,
With too much loving bruised and broken through,
Would you keep your own a white and hidden thing
From that strange joy whose end is sorrowing?
Would you take my scars for sign this thing is true?
Nay, not so —
Your heart must learn what wiser hearts may know.

INERTIA

I NEED you so — you need me not at all —
This is the bitterest of bitter things;
You make my love the puny plant that clings
To the firm granite of a mighty wall,
Helpless to aid its strength or stay its fall.
I would not have you weaker, yet I know
My strength had grown in answer to your call
And reached its highest measure striving so.
Now I but lean where once I might have led
If you had craved my helping. Now I stand
Crippled through very uselessness. I dread
Lest some day you should seek a guiding hand
And I shall tremble from you all dismayed,
Having at last forgotten how to aid.

TWO BROTHERS

THE dead son's mother sat and wept
  And her live son plucked at her gown,
" Oh, mother, long is the watch we've kept! "
  But she beat the small hands down.

The little live son he clung to her knee —
  And frightened his eyes and dim —
" Have ye never, my mother, a word for me? "
  But she turned her face from him,

Saying, " Oh and alack, mine own dead son,
  Could I know but the path a-right,
How fast and how fast my feet would run
  Through the way o' Death to-night! "

Saying, " Oh and alack, for thy empty place
  And the ache in my heart to hide! "
The little live son hath touched her face,
  But she thrust his hands aside.

The mother hath laid her down and wept
  In the midnight's chill and gloom;
In the hour ere dawn while the mother slept
  The ghost came in the room.

And the little live son hath called his name
  Or ever he passed the door,
" Oh, brother, brother, 'tis well ye came,
  For our mother's grief is sore!

" Oh, brother, brother, she weeps for thee
As a rain that beats all day,
But me she pushes from off her knee
And turneth her eyes away."

And the little dead son he spake again,
" My brother, the dead have grace
Though they lay them low from the sight of men
With a white cloth on their face.

" Oh, brother, the dead have gifts of love,
Though lonely and low they lie,
By my mother's love do I speak and move
And may not wholly die."

The little live son he sighed apart,
" Oh, brother, ye live," quoth he,
" In my mother's grief and my mother's heart
And my mother's memory.

" And vain for thee is my mother's cry,"
The little live son hath said,
" For ye are loved and ye may not die —
It is only I who am dead! "

THE INHERITANCE

"WHAT left thy fathers to thee when they died,
Oh, honest neighbour?"
"Gold pieces, broad and fruitful lands and wide,
Surcease from labour."
"And nothing else?" "What better could there be,
Oh, vagrant daring
Who rests an hour 'neath my staunch roof-tree
From onward faring?

"What left thy fathers that these meet thy look
With such dissavour?"
"Faith, friend, they left me but a tattered book
And this lute's favour.
Yet do I bear much wealth within my hold,
Oh, poorer brother,
Seeing the pages of the one are gold,
Gold-voiced the other."

"For thy inheritance I would not fling
A silver penny!"
"Nay, friend, heaped treasures could not buy this thing
Though thou hast many.
Fearful of losing much thou e'en must pray
Meek prayers and troubled
While lightsomely each day and every day
My wealth is doubled."

"Hast thou no envy of my flocks and kine,
My hearth and housing?"
"Nay, friend, a larger, fairer space is mine
For my carousing.

Through doorways low or high my song hath worth
To bid me enter.
My fathers left me freedom of the earth
From edge to centre!

"So fare thee well, mine host, the night goes swift
And I would follow."
"Farewell, my King o' Tatters, who makes shift
Like any swallow."
Farewell they said — I saw Sir Pompous glance
His puzzled scorning,
While he of the divine inheritance
Pressed on to morning.

PIERRETTE

THE empty street was gray with dawn,
  But everywhere the lamps burned still
As though a dead man's eyes stared on
  Through some undying will.

The city seemed no more a thing
  Than some great door she might not move,
That, blank and all unanswering,
  Barred her from rest and love.

The morning wind, like some pale ghost,
  Fretted the tavern's creaking sign
As though it whimpered to the host
  For sorrow's anodyne.

The mist clung damply to her dress,
  Dragging the listless, tired feet
That still on that quest purposeless,
  Toiled up and down the street,

And grayed the hair's pathetic gold
  Where one day Love's own hand was laid,
And weary she, and very cold,
  And bitterly afraid.

PRESCIENCE

WAS there any sign that came to her
  Ere the dream was a certain thing?
Nay — she but thought she heard the stir
  Of the closed buds blossoming.

Was there any sign that she knew at all
  Ere the false little dream took wing?
Nay — she but thought she felt the fall
  Of a snowflake in the Spring.

THE WOUNDED

IT was my Belovèd's voice
  Hailed and called me in;
He, who bade the lutes exult
  Through the viol's din,
Kissed me thrice upon my lips,
  Bade the feast begin.

It was my Belovèd's hand
  Gave me bread and wine;
He, who smiled within my eyes,
  With sweet words and fine,
Crowned me with the wreath he wore
  For his loving's sign.

It was my Belovèd's hand
  Ere the dawn was blue,
While his eyes were deep in mine,
  While my lips he knew,
Sudden, with a traitor's blow,
  Stabbed me through and through.

It was my Belovèd's hand
  Thrust me to the ground.
Mock, O you, who, stabbed of Hate,
  Pass me, healed and sound,
Me, who, in the house of Love,
  Perish of my wound.

MY Heart's Desire hath led me
Through barren lands and vain,
And bitter bread she fed me
And bade me drink of pain.
Ah me, I climbed a weary way
To heights of her disdain,
Yet would I give the years I live
To walk the path again.

The Heart's Possessed beside me
Leads me a level way;
There may no ill betide me,
No thirst or famine stay.
She hath no wish but wish of mine,
No joy save to obey,
And at my side her form must bide
Until my dying day.

My Heart's Possessed hath stilled me
From all unrest malign;
Yea, eased the hope that thrilled me
With too keen pain and fine.
Yet, oh, my Heart, my Heart's Desire,
My ungained dream divine
That never turned the while I yearned
Nor closed her hands in mine.

THE CLOSED DOOR

I NEVER crossed your threshold with a grief
  But that I went without it; never came
  Heart-hungry but you fed me, eased the blame
And gave the sorrow solace and relief.

I never left you but I took away
  The love that drew me to your side again
  Through that wide door that never could remain
Quite closed between us for a little day.

O Friend, who gave and comforted, who knew
  So over well the want of heart and mind,
  Where may I turn for solace now, or find
Relief from this unceasing loss of you?

Be it for fault, for folly or for sin,
  Oh, terrible my penance and most sore —
  To face the tragedy of that closed door
Whereby I pass and may not enter in.

FAILURE

OH, long and dark the stairs I trod
With stumbling feet to find my God.

Gaining a foothold bit by bit,
Then slipping back and losing it.

Never progressing, striving still
With weakening grasp and fainting will.

Bleeding to climb to God, while He
Serenely smiled, unnoting me.

Then came a certain time when I
Loosened my hold and fell thereby.

Down to the lowest step my fall
As though I had not climbed at all.

And while I lay despairing there,
Listen, a footfall on the stair!

In the same path where I, dismayed,
Faltered and fell and lay afraid.

And lo! when hope had ceased to be,
My God came down the stairs to me.

THE UNFORGIVEN

NEVER for me shall your lamp be lighted,
Never for me shall your door stand wide,
Though the ghost may come when the man has died
To keep the oath that his live lips plighted.

Though a thousand lights on the way be sighted,
Dark and unhoused one heart must bide;
Never for me shall your lamp be lighted,
Never for me shall your door stand wide.

I pay the price of a wrong unrighted —
I am free of the world from tide to tide,
But I never may kneel by one love's side,
Penitent, heartsick for all I slighted.
Never for me shall your door stand wide,
Never for me shall your lamp be lighted.

THE POET

FIRE he put upon his lips,
In his heart a blade,
"Thus," quoth Allah to his Saints,
"Are my poets made."

"Yet what use," the Maker sighed
To his angels near;
"Since I may not give the world
Ears that it may hear."

A PRISONER

HIS youth was like that mariner of old,
  Keen with the daring that makes dreams come true,
  Who steered a course courageous to those new,
Strange lands that ever beckoned to the bold;
To whom adventure was a cup of gold
  From which the valiant, thirsting spirit drew
  That wine of singing life, the old gods' brew,
To make their heroes glad with strength untold.
This was his youth triumphant. See to-day
  How life hath thrust him crippled 'neath her bars
    Of ceaseless toil and sordid hopes and gains —
A prisoner of Fate who needs must stay
  With dulled eyes turned forever from the stars,
    A bound Columbus weighed with many chains.

BARRIERS

NOW who art thou, between me and my Life,
My Life that beckons me?
"I am thy Heritage. Oh, young heart rife
With hope and dreams and daring, let these be
Silent forever. I, who may not tire,
With old arms bar the way to thy desire."

Now who art thou between me and my Life,
My Life that calls, that calls?
"I am thy Duty. Far from mirth or strife,
A withered beldam shut within dull walls,
I ask that service thou shalt not deny
And my least plaints are thongs to hold thee by."

Now who art thou between me and my Life,
My Life that cries for me?
"I am thy Love. In thy hand rests the knife
That slays and sets thee free.
Mine are these feeble fingers at thy heart —
Strike if thou hast the courage, and depart."

THE DEATH OF HÉLOISE

SURELY your life draws hourly near to mine;
  But yet a little and my hands shall lie
  Close in your own the while earth mistily
Fades like a cloud against the sunset line.
Have we not waited, bravely desolate,
  Telling our rosaries of patient tears
  Climbing these endless stairs of barren years
Niched by those pallid priests who bade us wait?
Have we not toiled each to his separate height?
  Surely our paths approach, and suddenly
  One space shall hold us both, and there shall be
A sound of singing from the shattered night,
  And full against the dawn, God's saints, aghast,
    Shall watch us cling, and laugh and sob, "At last!"

THE LOST WINGS

"KNOW you where it was I lost my wings?"
"Oh, poet, at the Mart of Sordid Things
Where the merchants strive and barter all day long,
Where the clamour of the huckster drowned your song.
Oh, poet, at the Mart of Sordid Things."

"Know you where it was I lost my wings?"
"Oh, poet, at the House of Pleasing Things —
At the place of noisy laughter, where the mirth
Of wine and feasting dragged your song to earth.
Oh, poet, at the House of Pleasing Things."

"Know you where it was I lost my wings?"
"Oh, poet, at the Place of Trifling Things —
The little scorn, the spite, the lesser love,
These maimed your song and killed the sweets thereof.
Oh, poet, at the Place of Trifling Things."

"Where then shall I find my wings again?"
"Oh, poet, in the Prison House of Pain —
From the silence, from the anguish, from the night
Shall the sudden sound of singing thrill to flight.
Oh, poet, in the Prison House of Pain."

MOTHER of many children I — sprung of my heart and my brain —
And some have been born in gladness and some have been born in pain;
But one has gone singing from out my door
To never come back again.

Content and Ease and Comfort — they abide with me day by day;
They smooth my couch and place my chair as dutiful children may,
And Success and Power, my strong-limbed sons,
Stand ever to clear my way.

And these be the prudent children, the careful children and wise;
There was one and only one with a reckless dream in his eyes.
He who was one with the wind o' the dawn
And kin to the wood and the skies.

Faithful and fond are my children, and they tend me well, in sooth;
Success and Content and Power, good proof is mine of their truth,
But the name of him that I lost was Joy,
My first-born Joy of Youth.

Well do my children guard me, jealous of this their right;
Carefully, soberly, ever by daylight and candle-light,
    But oh, for my prodigal Joy of Youth
Somewhere out in the night!

THE LITTLE CHRISTIAN

HE trembled in the morning,
  At noon he was afraid,
And heavy on his heart at night
  The hand of fear was laid.

A presence walked beside him
  Of horror and of fright —
A shadow in the sunshine,
  A menace in the night.

And this that dragged his childhood,
  This thing of scourge and rod,
They gave him as a priceless gift
  And bade him call it God.

They made for him a fear that killed
  The child-joy in his breast;
They made for him a shape of dread
  And bade him love it best.

O Mild, O Just, O Merciful!
  What then shall be their shame —
These souls who teach a little child
  To shudder at Thy name!

THE VICTORS

GOD gives the battle to the strong —
  What were His justice otherwise?
The valiant heart, the equal brain,
The fortitude that mocks at pain,
  On these the light victorious lies.
May I not speak these things — may I not know
Who hid my face and cowered from the foe?

God gives the battle to the strong —
  His heroes armoured with their might,
To those undaunted souls who fling
Light laughter to sore suffering
  And dare to stand, resist and smite.
Do I not know who shrank and fell dismayed,
Anxious and feeble-hearted and afraid?

God gives the battle to the strong —
  Amen! Amen! And ever thus
They jubilant sweep on to be
Crowned and enrobed with victory —
  Strong hearts with courage glorious.
May not a coward know who, grovelling, hears
Their distant song of triumph in his ears?

A MORNING

THE glad, mad wind went singing by,
The white clouds drove athwart the blue,
Bold beauty of the morning sky
And all the world was sun and dew,
And sweet, cold air with sudden glints of gold
Like spilled stars glowing in the cedars' hold.

I laughed for very joy of life,
Oh, thrilling veins, oh, happy heart,
Of this glad world with beauty rife,
Exult that we too are a part;
Rejoice! Rejoice! that miracle of birth
Gave us this golden heritage of earth.

Oh, bold, blue sky, oh, keen, glad wind,
I wonder me if this may be,
That some day, leaving life behind,
Our eyes shall view new land, new sea
So exquisite that, lo, with thrilling breath,
We shall laugh loud for very joy of death.

SOMETHING tapped at my window-pane,
Someone called me without my door,
Someone laughed like the tinkle o' rain,
The robin echoed it o'er and o'er.

I threw the door and the window wide;
Sun and the touch of the breeze and then —
"Oh, *were* you expecting me, dear?" she cried,
And here was April come back again.

LOUD he piped for them to dance —
Oh, the gay retreat, advance,
  Like surging waves that lean and lift
To know the red star's glance!
  And their bare brown feet's refrain
  Was like patter of the rain
    That thrills in May time through the green
  Where cloistered birds are fain.

Gay the piper played the while grinned he craftily,
" Oh, rare and ripe for this I pipe, pay ye must," quoth he.

Oh, the dancers' eyes were bright
As a flame in middle night,
  For shrill he piped the lure of life,
The daring of delight.
  And they tripped it to and fro
  As the light-foot fairies go
    That circle on the greensward
  When a crescent moon dips low.

Fast the piper played the while grinned he craftily,
" For this my tune or late or soon, pay ye must," quoth he.

Oh, the piper's notes were sweet
As a rose in noontide heat,
  And Love was like the pulse of flame
That through his measure beat,

Oh, of love his pipings were
Till the air was all astir
With fragrance of his music
Spilled as spikenard and as myrrh.

Soft the piper piped the while grinned he craftily,
"For this my best and loveliest pay ye must," quoth he.

But what time the twilight died
Oh, he flung his pipes aside,
And "Sweethearts, now comes reckoning!"
Grim Time the piper cried.
"Give me guerdon for my pains,
Give me payment for my strains,
Now yield me for your pleasuring
The price my piping gains."

"Nay, but wherewith may we pay?" Grinned he craftily,
"Youth of you and truth of you and joy of you," quoth he.

Oh, the shrinking forms and bent,
Oh, the weary feet that went
Through dust of all regretting
From the place of merriment!
And again the piper blew
For another madder crew
In silver of the moonlight
And the shimmer of the dew.

Gay the piper played the while grinned he craftily,
"Yea, good sooth, I pipe for youth and take my pay," quoth he.

THE LIGHTS OF CROYDON

OH, the lights of Croydon town gleaming through the mist —
On the morn he sailed away both my eyes he kissed;
"Look ye well, blue eyes and sweet, look ye well," quoth he,
"Watch ye from the dunes o' sand when the night comes down;
When the lights o' Croydon rise like ship-lights on the sea
It's I'll be sailing back to you, oh, back from Croydon town."

Oh, the lights of Croydon town — high they shine and bright,
Like a slender crescent moon curving through the night;
One by one they fade away when the stars are dead,
When the lean waves leap to tell names of men they drown.
"Watch ye well, blue eyes and sweet," those the words he said —
Weary watch and long they've kept, oh, lights of Croydon town.

Oh, the lights of Croydon town — yearning through the nights,
Bird-like has the heart of me beat against your lights.
Dim the eyes that felt his kiss, thin the hair and gray,
Bent the form that never wore white o' wedding gown.
"Watch ye well, sweet eyes," quoth he the morn he sailed away,
Who ne'er came sailing back again, oh, lights of Croydon town.

AT THE DAY'S END

ALL day among the anxious crowd I pressed,
All day I strove and bartered with the best,
All day my feet were busy in the mart —
Have I not earned my little hour of rest?

Oh, my beloved, the shelter of your heart!
Oh, my beloved, the quiet of your breast!

Ere the morn broke Toil called us to arise;
When the noon fell she drove us tyrant-wise;
Slow in the twilight died her loud alarms —
Fain would I turn me to where silence lies.

Oh, my beloved, the comfort of your arms!
Oh, my beloved, the healing of your eyes!

As footworn travellers a little space
Kneel in the shadow of some holy place,
Too wearied to lament or to rejoice,
So in your love receive me of your grace.

Oh, my beloved, the soothing of your voice!
Oh, my beloved, the pity of your face!

THE FORTUNATE

PITY me not that I, who am grown old,
Fold empty hands no other's hands may hold,
  And sit in silence in a silent place
    With never hope to-morrow may redeem,
  Nor joy of yesterdays upon my face.
    Pity me not — for I have had my dream.

Give me no tears that I, who much desired,
Failed those far heights to which my life aspired;
  Where joy to seek and ecstasy to gain
    My one star lured and drew me to its beam.
  Oh, you who saw the failure and the pain,
    Pity me not — for I have had my dream.

Yea, I, whose life is chained to dragging days,
Have sped my heart through sweet and wondrous ways;
  In far, fair lands beyond the day and night,
    On strange, still seas where white moons drift and gleam,
  I — I have kissed the lips of my delight.
    Pity me not — for I have had my dream.

Oh, you with hope fulfilled, that realised
Seems but a little triumph and unprized;
  For me a joy more exquisite and fine
    Though life hath led me by a barren stream,
  Though my desire hath been never mine,
    Pity me not — for I have had my dream.

"WHY do you look from the window so,
Little Felicia, daughter of mine?
There still is the long white seam to sew
And the white lambs' wool to spin."
"Oh, mother, below here in the snow
Stands a little lad with a mouth like wine —
A little lad with a carven bow
And he makes as though he would enter in,
Mother of mine."

"Nay — there is no one there at all,
Little Felicia, my idle one;
Naught I see but the white snow's fall
And thy task is still the same."
"Oh, mother, harken, I hear him call,
'Pray, sweetheart, is the door undone?
Let me in who am weak and small.'
May I bid him enter in Pity's name,
Mother of mine?"

"Nothing I hear and naught I see,
Little Felicia, who works so ill;
And there's much to do ere darkness be —
Come, daughter, thy task begin."
But little Felicia blushingly
Turned away from the window-sill;
"Oh, mother, I spake no word," quoth she,
"But I fear — I fear he hath entered in,
Mother of mine."

THE LOSER

I HAVE gambled away my life —
  Small ventures on that and this,
A bit of youth for a useless truth,
  A trifle of heart for a kiss.

Yea, with pitiful stakes and small
  In a crafty game played I;
With counters spanned in a careful hand
  When the losses were over high.

I have gambled away my life —
  A little now and again;
Oh, bit by bit have I wasted it
  In the fashion of weakling men.

I have stayed in a coward's game
  With a sickening fear of loss;
Afraid to play for the joy that lay
  In the fall of the reckless toss.

I have gambled away my life
  In a puny, cautious game,
But now, alack, were my treasure back
  I would never play it the same.

I would stake my all on the throw —
  Mind, soul, yea, all that is I —
And in fierce content and merriment
  Had waited to live or die.

THE LOSER

To live or die like a man
  Heart glad of the chance he had,
Who shook with Fate for his table mate
  In a glorious bout and mad.

In a moment to end it so —
  Die beggar or live a king —
And pay the score be it less or more
  In the hour of the reckoning.

And to die, if die I must,
  With a heart unswerved, and then
With face to the sod give thanks to God
  That I played like a man with men.

THE WINDOW

THIS is the window where one day
I watched him as he came,
When all the world was white with May
And vibrant with his name.

His eyes to mine, my eyes to his —
Oh, lad, how glad were we
What time I leaned to catch the kiss
Your fingers tossed to me!

This is the window where one day
I crouched to see him go,
When all the world with wrath was gray
And desolate with snow.

Oh, this the glass where prophet-wise
My fate I needs must spell;
Through this I looked on Paradise,
Through this I looked on Hell.

TRAVESTY

SURELY I should have seen that flower face,
Say, in an English lane when Spring was new
And high, white clouds were drifting in the blue,
And a glad lark made music in the place;
Where all about you was no thing more base
Than the pink hawthorn heavy with its dew,
And where my man's eyes at the sight of you
Should drop, unworthy of such maiden grace.
Oh, child, it should be thus, and yet to-night
Here in the city's red iniquities
Strange I should find you in this garish light
With this hard mocking in your tired eyes
And curled, red lips set jesting at the sight
Of a man's wrath at Life's mad comedies.

THE LITTLE SISTER

WHEN the days are dreariest,
  When the nights are long,
Sudden on the creaking stair
  Sounds her careless song;
Sudden on the darkened sill
  Falls a footstep free
And the Little Sister comes
  Back again to me.

Blithe and gay and jubilant,
  All her words a jest,
Laughter on her merry lips,
  Youth upon her breast,
Happy dreams within her eyes
  Daring days to be,
So the Little Sister comes
  Back again to me.

And she hath the eyes I had
  When the world was new,
And she hath the heart I had
  When the world was true;
And my very name she bears —
  Ah, so close our tie! —
Just the Little Sister now
  Who one day was I.

THE LITTLE SISTER

Strange that she who knew no tears
  So my tears should wake;
Strange her very happiness
  My own heart should break.
Oh, so other than myself,
  Two, yet one are we,
Little Sister of my age
  Comes she back to me.

Not a wistful ghost she comes —
  Better so, perchance —
But with lips too fain to sing,
  Feet too fain to dance.
And I turn my eyes from her
  (Eyes she must not see)
When the Little Sister comes
  Back again to me.

THE GOD OF CLAY

I WATCH each day my singing sisters go
  Lightfooted to the temple on the height,
Bearing fair gifts, trailed blooms of rose and snow
  To please the golden gods of their delight.

The golden gods that, in their lofty place,
  Stand in their flawless might for all to see,
Bearing each one upon his perfect face
  The pride of his infallibility.

And ever on their way and singing thus
  They pause sometimes to urge me or deride,
" Oh sister, wilt thou never come with us
  To worship where the gods of gold abide? "

They never know that ere they pass the gates
  Of bronze and ivory, I take my way
To where, in his unlighted darkness, waits
  My desecrated, shattered god of clay.

Before their golden gods my sisters cast
  Their fleeting blooms, the gladness of their years;
I bear to my degraded god this last
  Great gift of silence and of awful tears.

WHEN WOFFINGTON SOLD WATER-CRESS

WHEN Woffington sold water-cress,
  Crying her wareings up and down
  The narrow streets of Dublin town,
I wonder did no passer guess
The spirit in the dingy dress,
  The heart beneath the tattered gown?

Did not the eyes' audacious brown
  Speak Harry Wildair's recklessness —
Whispered no prescience of renown —
  When Woffington sold water-cress?

Nay, blind we are as in those days
  The folk of Dublin who went by;
  Perchance, this moment you and I
Have passed upon our several ways
The little lass whom future praise
  Shall hail as some divinity.

To-morrow — and we swell the cry —
  To-day — we pass, nor pause nor gaze;
They stayed you, Peggy, but to buy,
  And blind we are as in those days.

Child, is it you will wear the bays,
  You who will win the world's caress?
Nay, blind we are as in those days
  When Woffington sold water-cress.

'TONIO

I PLAYED all day — the other children worked
Hard in the vineyard, and my father said,
" Hungry to-night shall 'Tonio go to bed! "
And scolded. Where I hid I heard his words
And laughed and ran; the leaves were gold and red
And the wind whirled them through the woods
like birds.

All day I played — the sun and wind and I;
Between the trees and up and down the hill;
And the noon came and it was still, so still;
And I stretched out full-length upon the grass
And watched the clouds like white sails reach and
fill
And catch the sun for freight, and drift and pass.

I played all day. Oh, it was good to think
How hard my brothers worked while I went free.
" Hungry to-night goes 'Tonio," so said he;
But I danced on the hill-top with the moon —
A great red moon that came up merrily
And called the wind to pipe us both a tune.

" Hungry to-night shall 'Tonio go to bed! "
Ah well, to-morrow I shall work and eat
And go to bed with aching hands and feet,
And sleep as oxen sleep that plow all day;
To-night I shall sleep hungry but dream sweet —
I wish that I could always starve and play.

THE QUEEN'S SONG

THIS is the song the King Cophetua
  Heard 'neath her casement, as the morning broke
  And the white dawn came rolling in like smoke
From altars where the priestly sun hath sway.

These are the words the King Cophetua
  Heard all his life time sound through jest and song,
  Thrill through his dreaming when the nights were
    long,
And make a mirthless melody of day.

The song he held as some red wound that stirs
  Forever in the torn breast where it lies,
  That tortured life and made, at last, the eyes
Of very death seem lovelier than hers.

" Soft is the King's white hand as down,
  Feeble his arms as silken thong;
Oh, but the gypsy's face was brown,
  The gypsy's arms were strong!

" His eyes were bluer than the day,
  Purple with shadows as the night;
The open earth was ours to stray —
  The highways of delight.

" We were the comrades of the sun,
  Brother and sister of the rain;
And high, white moon when day was done
  Claimed us as mates again.

THE QUEEN'S SONG

" My hair the wayside rose might bind,
  Its thorn my tattered gown could hold;
We were the playmates of the wind,
  The comrades of the wold.

" Fair feasts he gained from brook and tree —
  He fed my heart a food divine;
The words of him were bread to me,
  His kisses were as wine.

" In the gold garden of the sun
  All day our joy went singing thus,
And night by night the witch moon spun
  Her white tent over us.

" A beggar lass and lover bold,
  Ragged our raiment as was meet,
But our love walked in cloth of gold
  And golden shod his feet.

* * * * * *

" Why should a king's eyes know me fair?
  Why should a king's eyes find me good?
Why should a king's will bid me bear
  Weight of his kinglihood?

" Across the crowd my eyes caught his,
  Across the crowd he came to me,
Strange coloured as a great wave is,
  Resistless as the sea.

" He raised my face to meet his gaze,
  His fingers lingered in my hair;
His smile beat down my hot amaze,
  And left white terror there.

" The gypsy's hand fell cold from mine
  What time the King's hand touched my own;
Slow-stepped along the shouting line,
  He drew me to the throne.

" They brought me royal robes to wear,
  They gave me curious food and sweet;
They bound red jewels in my hair,
  White samite on my feet.

" Beggar and King we knelt to priest —
  The censers swung, the heralds cried;
High-throned they served us at the feast —
  A Queen at a King's side.

" Strange that a great Queen needs must keep
  A beggar's heart within her breast;
Strange, when a Queen lies down to sleep,
  A beggar's dreams mock rest.

" Strange that a great Queen's thought must creep
  Down dusty highways of old years;
Strange that a Queen's cold eyes should weep
  A beggar's burning tears.

THE QUEEN'S SONG

"I — only I — the truth may know,
Beggar and bound, who once had been
Free of the wind and sun and snow,
Of very love the Queen.

"What though I go in cloth of gold,
What though my bread is fine and sweet,
When Love stands starving in the cold,
With naked hands and feet!

"Soft the King's eyes and dull of mien,
Cold the King's face as one long dead.
Oh, but the gypsy's eyes were keen,
The gypsy's lips were red!

* * * * * *

"We were the comrades of the air,
Brother and sister to the wood.
Why should a King's eyes know me fair,
A King's eyes find me good?"

This is the song the King Cophetua
Heard 'neath her casement as the morning broke.

THE LOST HERITAGE

THE close companionship of earth,
Its tenderness and might,
These things were ours by blood and birth,
By heritage and right.

We were born brothers to the wood
And in our veins there ran
That fire of joy and hardihood
That is the blood of Pan.

The language of the leaves was ours
And ours the kindred tie
That told us in the lightless hours
What strange, wild mate went by.

Yet, brothers of our heritage,
What is there left to-day?
We sold it for a petty wage,
For servitude and pay.

Stone upon stone our cities grow
Mask-like on earth's shamed face;
We cause our kindred's overthrow
To build our hinds a place.

Crowded and cringing and content
We cry from mart and door,
"Behold the pottage excellent
We sold our birthright for!"

THE LOST HERITAGE

We have forgotten day by day
That once we walked elate,
How all majestic was our sway,
How mighty our estate.

This be our shame — to doubt their worth
Who one day understood
The close companionship of earth,
The high hills' brotherhood.

THE DAY'S END

SURELY our time of love was as a day —
  Faint dawn-break and the noon's fierce flush of light,
And twilight, like a witch-bloom, strange and gray,
  Unfolding to the night.

Faint dawn-break — how we watched it, you and I;
  First through the mist a soaring bird-note sprung,
A colour caught in crimson on the sky,
  And our hands clasped and clung.

And there was sudden dawning in your eyes —
  A prescience of the wonders that would be
When the veiled heart of you should thrill and rise
  Of all disguise made free.

The hour of noon — ah, sweet, how swift it came!
  The full sun and the silence, when we two
Saw Love revealed and through his eyes of flame
  Looked, understood — and knew.

In the white light, the shadowless vast space,
  What could be held or hidden, each from each?
Oh, as my lips were still upon your face,
  Our souls were loud with speech.

* * * * *

How long ago it was — since shadow-wise
  Spread the slow twilight through the darkling land.
And weariness is heavy in your eyes
  And in your listless hand.

THE DAY'S END

And sombre with the warning of the night
  The ragged cloud edge drags upon the hill;
And in your voice there wakes a note of fright
  And wan your face and chill.

Love and day die, yet have we known their best.
  Once more your lips — nay, look and laugh and lean;
See where the one rift burns across the West
  To show that day has been.

THE WANDERLUST

OH, the voice came again when the fields were bare for sowing —
A-whispering, a-whispering, it never gave me rest,
" Oh, lad, the world is white with Spring, oh, lad, be up and going —
Down the wide road, the free road that stretches to the West."

I looked a-down the wide road and I was fain to go;
I looked into a stranger's eyes and I was fain to stay;
But still the whisper burned like flame that flickers to and fro,
" There's much to see and much to find, away, my lad, away! "

Oh, the voice came again when the grain was in the growing —
A-crying and a-crying, it followed where I went,
" Oh, lad, the Summer trails are clear, oh, lad, be up and going —
Through the far way, the green way, the way of all content."

I looked upon the far trail and I was fain to go;
I looked within my sweetheart's eyes and fain to stay was I;
But still the voice kept pace with me a-down the blossomed row,
" There's much to see and much to find, oh, lad, before you die."

Oh, the voice comes again when the fields are ripe for mowing —
A-clamouring, a-clamouring, I may not choose but heed,
" Oh, lad, the keen wind fills the sails, oh, lad, be up and going —
The unplumbed seas, the unfound lands are waiting on your speed."

I look across the wondrous world — I may not choose but go;
I kiss my wife upon her mouth nor make her prayers reply;
Oh, voice that is the soul of me, I follow high or low —
There's much to see and much to find — good-bye, my sweet, good-bye.

I HEARD A VOICE

I HEARD a voice in the darkness singing
(That was a valiant soul I knew)
And the joy of his song was a wild bird winging
Swift to his mate through a sky of blue.

Myself — I sang when the dawn was flinging
Wide his guerdon of fire and dew;
I heard a voice in the darkness singing
(That was a valiant soul I knew).

And his song was of love and all its bringing
And of certain day when the night was through;
I raised my eyes where the hope was springing
And I think in His Heaven God smiled too.
I heard a voice in the darkness singing
(That was a valiant soul I knew).

ON TYBURN HILL

ON Tyburn Hill on hanging day
Cut-throat and thief and gallant stay;
  Noble and dandy, sober cit,
  Mercer and draper, fop and wit,
And chattering belle in fine array.

My Lady's coach obstructs the way —
  Gilt cupids on its panels flit;
  And languishing doth Beauty sit
    On Tyburn Hill.

" A highwayman is hanged," they say;
My Lady smiles, " 'Tis like a play."
  " Lud! Lud! A proper man and fit."
  " 'Tis hoped he'll make a fight of it."
These be the passing prayers men pray
    On Tyburn Hill.

MAY FLOWERS

MAY flowers on the city street —
A keen-faced vendor sells, with eyes
Fitted for coarser merchandise
Than these pathetic bits of sweet
That breathe of vague simplicities.

May flowers on the city street —
Here where the tide of traffic roars
Against its narrow, crowded shores
Where men go by with hurrying feet
And barter swings its thousand doors.

May flowers on the city street —
Why, 'tis as though the young-eyed Spring
Herself had come — an artless thing,
A country lass, demure and neat —
To smile upon us wondering.

May flowers on the city street —
Pink and white poetry abloom
Here in this clamor, crush and gloom —
A home-thought in the battle's heat,
A love-song in a sunless room.

MAY FLOWERS

May flowers on the city street —
For one poor coin behold I buy
Springtime and youth and poetry,
E'en in this sordid mart unmeet
So many miles from Arcady.

CONTRAST

BECAUSE mine eyes were lifted high
They lost what time they won;
I might have loved the moon if I
Had never seen the sun.

Had I not heard the crash and scream
Of great waves on a sea,
The prattle of a brook might seem
A wondrous threnody.

I may not tell if God hath blessed
Or banned me in this wise;
Because one day I knew the best
No lesser thing I prize.

Ah well, the little joys go by —
I smile remembering
I might have loved the clown if I
Had never seen the king.

A DREAM OF THESSALY

OH, Summer that my sad eyes may not see,
I yearn for you within the city gate;
Through heat and dust and din, I, desolate,
Long for your miracles of bloom and tree,
Your soft, slow winds and wide sea's mystery.
Ah me, to be a pagan girl elate,
Free-limbed, loose-haired, with dreaming eyes, await,
Deep in the purple woods of Thessaly,
To hear a rustle through the river weeds
And sudden note of laughter, shrill and gay,
And, through the rifts of sunshine, look on this;
The great god Pan with hand upon the reeds,
Wet lilies in his long hair's disarray,
And lips up-pursed to catch a naiad's kiss.

THE GOD-GHOST

I KNOW that Pan is dead, yet now
  Along the river's darkling edge
  I saw the slender, silver sedge
As 'neath a fleeting footstep bow;

And this red lily from its stem
  Snapped suddenly and broke and fell
  What time some hand invisible
Stirred through the myriad blooms of them.

And there I saw the river break
  In gentle ripples, circling wide
  As though some long dead naiad sighed
Beneath it for old loving's sake,

And fain would rise again and greet
  Her goat-hoofed lover as he came
  Beneath the clustered trees, aflame
To pipe his longing at her feet;

Where black against the rising moon
  The mad Bacchante's wine-splashed crew
  Hailed them as mates of theirs and drew
Them captive by the wide lagoon.

I know that Pan is dead — I know
  In what strange fashion was his death,
  And how amazement gripped his breath
Who fell before an unknown foe,

THE GOD-GHOST

What time across the trembling green,
  Against the veiled and quaking sun,
  Sounded from Calvary that one
Torn death-cry of the Nazarene.

I know that Pan is dead — his host
  Are as blown leaves the winds abhor;
  Yet who shall say that nevermore
Walks upon earth his homeless ghost?

Where else were place for him, who hath
  No soul to whine at Heaven's gate;
  No soul to crush beneath the weight
Of Lucifer's exquisite wrath?

Goat-hoofed, earth-smeared he may not climb
  Where those great gods, who mocked their fall,
  Sit in a silence cynical
Awaiting their appointed time.

Only for him the earth — the earth
  That was his mother and his spouse;
  Who hailed him royal in her house
And waited on his love and mirth.

Wherefore he comes to her again
  In the green silences — I know;
  To-night I watched her forests glow
And felt her blissful tears of rain.

Behold, great Pan is here — for hark!
  Not that the river's murmurings
  Or moon-awakened bird that flings
A note of gold against the dark.

Hark! — for to-night the ghost of Pan
  Shrills from his slender river-rods
  The mockery that is a god's,
The suffering that is of man.

Man's wailing sense of impotence,
  The protest of the bruisèd clods,
  Meet with the note that shows a god's
Contemptuous indifference.

* * * * *

My thoughts are tangled in the strain.
  Not mine to trace their wildered thread;
  I only know that Pan is dead,
I only know he lives again.

And so will live until down hurled
  Creation crashes from its course,
  And some malignant, maddened force
Shrieks as it views what was a world.

A SONG OF KAMAL

HE who is desolate may cry
His sorrow to the earth and sky.

Who has lost all has naught to fear;
Haply, the gods may laugh to hear,

Rejoicing that man's discontent
Should flavour their grim merriment.

We who are happy, you and I,
Must laugh low and walk silently

Lest we shall taste what gall may be
Wrapped in the great gods' jealousy.

Who, envious of man's delight,
Lean from their hills to strike and blight.

Let us kiss softly and laugh low
Lest they should know.

THE IRISH HEART

(*To S. W. P.*)

THE DAUGHTER

IT'S not myself I'm grieving for, it's not that I'm complaining,
(He's a good man, is Michael, and I've never felt his frown)
But there's sorrow beating on me like a long day's raining
For the little wrinkled face of her I left in Kerrydown.

(It's just Herself I'm longing for, Herself and no other —
Do you mind the morns we walked to mass when all the fields were green?
'Twas I that pinned your kerchief, oh, me mother, mother, mother!
The wide seas, the cruel seas and half the world between.)

'Tis the man's part to say the word, the wife's to up and follow —
(It's a fair land we've come to and there's plenty here for all)
And 'tis not the homesick longing that lures me like a swallow
But the one voice across the world that draws me to its call.

(It's just Herself I'm longing for, Herself and no other —
Do you mind the tales you told me when the turf was blazing bright?
Me head upon your shoulder, oh, me mother, mother, mother —
The broad seas between us and yourself alone to-night!)

There's decent neighbours all about, there's coming and there's going;
It's kind souls will be about me when the little one is here;
But it's her word I'm wanting, her comfort I'd be knowing,
And her blessing on the two of us to drive away the fear.

(It's just Herself I'm longing for, Herself and no other —
Do you mind the soft Spring mornings when you stitched the wedding-gown?
The little, careful stitches, oh, me mother, mother, mother,
Meself beyond the broad seas and you in Kerrydown!)

THE CRUEL NAME

THAT was a cruel name, my lad, you gave me when we parted.
The four winds caught the sound of it and threw it to the world;
There's never breaking twig or leaf nor any echo started
But sends it back to me again, an evil stone new hurled.

That was another name I had, a fair name and dear to me.
(Mind you how the Summer noon closed blue about the hill?)
Both my hands within your own, your keen face near to me,
The gold o' sun and scent o' earth — Oh, warm and sweet and still!

That was a cruel name, my lad, you gave me at your turning.
The very stones you trod on cried it to me as you went,
And every breeze and every bird was over quick in learning —
'Tis blown to me, 'tis sung to me till all my heart is rent.

That was another name I had, a fair name and dear to me.
(Mind you how the lazy sheep stood white against the sky?)
Both my hands within your own, your keen face near to me —
Oh, lad, I'm praying 'tis that name that Death will call me by.

OMENS

WHY do you tremble, Asthore, Asthore,
Here in the arms of your lover?
That was never a footstep on the floor —
'Twas the fall of a leaf and nothing more.
(Oh, a withered leaf blown in at the door
To tell us Summer is over.)

Pulse of my soul, and why do you start?
Come near to the great logs burning.
They flame like love at a strong man's heart —
A desire, a fire, a bliss — a smart.
(Oh, fierce they burn till they drop apart,
All, all to the ashes turning.)

Core of my heart, why listen and wait?
That call? 'Twas a wild bird's crying —
Naught but a bird that nests too late,
A wildered bird that beats at the gate.
(Oh, a bird in the night that seeks its mate,
Bleeding and lost and dying.)

OH, it's he that's comin' back again — I've got the letter
read —
(Oh, Mary, send the sea be smooth and see the ship be
sound!)
He's comin' from America, me fine, black, curly head,
And I thought before this day would dawn 'twas I'd be
under ground.
I'm laughin' like and cryin' like and never stroke I do —
The neighbours troopin' through the door have left me
green a track;
It's "Good mornin', Mary Murphy. It's great news we
have of you —
You'll be the proud old woman when the lad comes
back."

The little, barefoot, bold gossoon, he's comin' back again —
(Oh, lad, I almost raised the keen the day I watched you
go.)
And he's comin' back a six-foot man to me that's like a
wren,
With pound notes in the hand of him and linen like the
snow.
It's I've put out his father's chair and scrubbed it till it
shone,
And his father's pipe (God save us!) lying filled upon the
rack;
There'll be no poor widow woman sittin' here at night
alone
And crying in her tea-cup when the lad comes back.

I'm sleepin' none and eatin' none and countin' up the days —
(Oh, just to hear the foot of him come soundin' on the floor!)
I'm shakin' with the joy of it, to set the turf ablaze,
And lay the table decent and be waitin' at the door.
Oh, it's I'm the old fool woman, but it's this I'm bold to do;
It's twenty years come Hallowmas I'm walkin' in the black,
And I've bought meself a kerchief and the colour of it's blue,
(Sure Himself would never mind it) when the lad comes back.

A SPRING SONG

IT'S myself that is sick for the Winter's breaking,
It's myself that is sad for the April's waking —
  ('Tis the thought that I'm thinking the whole day long,
    'Tis the dream that I dream by night.)
When all the green of the grass is growing
And all the bloom of the blossoms blowing,
  And the world will be all in white, Asthore,
    The world will be all in white.

And it's oh, for the blue of the April weather,
And the morn when the two of us walk together —
  ('Tis the thought I'm thinking the whole day long,
    'Tis the dream that I dream by night.)
With all the birds in the parish singing,
And all the bells in the chapel ringing,
  And yourself will be all in white, Asthore,
    And yourself will be all in white.

DANNY

IT was on a Hallowmas
  Me boy sailed out,
Flags a-snapping in the breeze,
  The gay crowd all about,
And the little waves a-play,
  And the white ship in the bay,
The music and the shoutin'—
  Like the skirlin' of the storm,
And Danny, Oh, me Danny,
  In his brand new uniform!
The kissin' and the cheerin'
  And the last long shout!
It was on a Hallowmas
  Himself sailed out.

It was Holy Saturday
  Me boy came back;
Oh, the creepin', sullen ship
  With the gray wake in its track;
And the flag a-droopin' low
  Over them that laid below;
The women sobbin' on the dock —
  Oh, Mary, heed the cry!
An' the little child that trembled
  When the long black things went by.
Oh, Danny, is it home you've come,
  And me here in the black!
It was Holy Saturday
  Himself came back.

THE CALL OF HOME

I'M the old tired woman now, for all that work is done —
I sit here in me daughter's house as any lady might;
It's "Take your ease, old woman dear," from each and every one
And willin' hands to wait on mine from morning until night.

But I have the longing on me that is heavier than tears —
(Though themselves could never know it from any word I say)
It's half the way across the world that I would be the day
And back in me own father's house I've left these fifty years.

'Tis not that I'm not happy here who's living like a queen —
The children's children at me knee, I'd not be leaving these;
'Tis never any word that's come across the miles between —
For aught I know the parish's self is crumblin' to the seas.

But I have the longing on me that is heavier than tears —
"Oh, take your ease, old woman dear," 'tis well for them to say;
'Tis just the little wild colleen I'd be again to-day
And back in me own father's house I've left these fifty years.

And to think I left it laughin' with a true lad's hand in mine —
The lips that kissed me goin', Oh, 'tis long that they've been cold;
And brief the sorrow that I had that never gave me sign
That need of it would tear the heart the day that saw me old.

But I have the longing on me — Oh, 'tis well me own time nears —
Since I'm waiting like a stranger here with those I love the best.
It's " Take your ease, old woman dear," but Oh, 'tis there I'd rest,
Once back in me own father's house I've left these fifty years.

THE KING'S CHAMBER

IN the King's chamber are strange things
  Wrought of fine gold and ivories,
  And carven chests from over seas,
And cabinets of gauds and rings;
And the great bed that is the King's
  Is hung with purple, gold entraced,
  And a deep mirror, many-faced,
From silver chains reflects and swings.

Two windows open to the West;
  Between them, on its braconette,
  Sits a strange bird with eyes of jet
And blurs of colour on its breast;
And on the wall, an honoured guest,
  A portrait hangs — of one whose eyes
  Grow into mine with proud surprise
That fain would fright me from my quest.

And in the niche a dim light glows
  Like that white flame that guards the pyx,
  And paints the ebon crucifix
And Christ's contorted form, and throws
A shade as black as human woes
  That cross-formed, wavers on the wall,
  As if His image still let fall
Shadow of warning on His foes.

Downstairs the feast goes on; the floors
  Echo the clang of oath and song.
  Methinks it taketh over-long
For men to prate of love and wars.

THE KING'S CHAMBER

In the King's chamber are closed doors,
  And in the gloom I stand apart
  Until that step which treads my heart
Sounds through the winding corridors.

Love, who hath cast out fear, behold
  Thy handiwork, how good it is!
  This mouth that hath not known a kiss,
This hair that wraps me fold on fold!
But yestermonth, if one had told
  Their beauty, I had mocked; to-night
  They are my coin to buy delight —
My mouth, my eyes, my arms are gold!

But yestermonth I came — a child
  New to court jests and flatteries,
  With shame-dyed blushes for men's lies,
And proud, bright eyes that seldom smiled;
And when one laughed, "The King, beguiled,
  Stays long in France — a wanton's eye
  Seems thong to hold a monarch by,"
I frowned and thought my ears defiled.

Then came a certain day — we played
  At cards; within the sun's red ring
  Earth, as a fruit, lay ripening,
And in our arbour was small shade.
Then laughter, at a word, was stayed:
  "Sweethearts, will give no welcoming?"
  And one 'mazed girl's voice shrilled, "The King!"
And I stood trembling and afraid.

Then someone spake my name; in one
  Swift moment's space I raised mine eyes
  To meet his smile's soft mockeries,
And in that glance was life begun.
Meseemed the earth reeled, and the sun
  Leaped at my heart as some great flame,
  Or yet his mouth had formed my name,
Or touch of lips on hand was done.

Oh, but the King is kingliest
  Of all live men, strong-armed and fair
  And beautiful as Lucifer
When God had claimed him as his best;
But the King's eyes, when his lips jest,
  Are weariest of all sad things,
  And ever in his laugh there rings
The broken accents of unrest.

I, who am noblest born of all
  The damosels who grace his court,
  And lend gay presence to his sport
At tourney and at festival;
I who move proudly in his hall,
  With high, proud eyes, feel at my heart
  The mighty passion throb and smart
That holds my very life in thrall.

Yet pride and shame had kept my blood
  From turning fire, to make the gay
  Sport of the gossip's holiday,
And I had held to what I would;

But at the mass to-day he stood
  Full-eyed upon no other than
  That exquisite white courtesan
Whose slow smile sneers at maidenhood.

She whom Grammont hath brought from France,
  To win him favours from the King
  (So runs the tale) — I saw her fling
A look like some flame-pointed lance
Swift in his eyes, and, as by chance,
  He leaned, pressed closer, smiled; and then
  My throat choked on the priest's "Amen"
And my eyes dizzied in their glance.

Could I have given strength to hate
  She would have fallen in her place,
  Prone on her fair, accursed face,
That wears too many smiles of late;
Yea, could I blast her with some great
  Torturing death, too terrible
  For any man to guess or tell,
That death this morn had been her fate.

But when the mass was done I fled
  Fast to my chamber's solace where
  I beat my breast and plucked my hair,
And called on God to smite me dead.
Then scorned myself — then mocked and said:
  "I strive no more — my tears are done.
  Between the midnight and the sun
Shall Love command me in God's stead."

Then straight I rose, and saw that day
  Died like a dim cloud in the waste
  Of empty sky, and called in haste
My tiring-maids with rich array
Of silken robes, and bade them lay
  Jewels on breast and arms, and touch
  My face, that whitened over-much,
With red — in that French wanton's way.

And I laughed, " Make me like a rose —
  Perfumed and soft. Perchance to-night
  One plucks a rose for his delight.
Make me the fairest one that blows! "
And one, " Nay, damosel, like those
  Strange blooms the witches give, that make
  Men wild with love if they but take
One look before their mad eyes close."

And when the jades had gone I tied
  My mask about my face, and made
  My cloak enwrap me like a shade;
Then, noiseless as a shade, I hied
To the King's door. A soldier cried
  An oath and stayed me; when I dropped
  My necklace in his hand, he stopped,
Stared, nodded, grinned — and stood aside.

In the King's chamber can I pray
  Those useless, empty prayers that slip
  So easily from lip to lip,
And that pleased God but yesterday?

What word is left for me to say,
  Who of His anger have no dread,
  But dare the living and the dead
This night to win me from my way?

Yea, Love hath bound me like a spell,
  I have no will to hide or fear;
  To whisper, lest men's ears should hear,
Or shrink from tales their tongues may tell.
Oh, my beloved, loved over-well,
  Meseems that if your kiss was laid
  Close on my lips, that, unafraid,
They still would smile through Death and Hell.

Love, crown me with thy wit, thy grace,
  That when the King is come, and when
  He hath dismissed his gentlemen,
I may come proudly from my place
And lift my mask and show my face,
  And tempt his quickening caress,
  Till all my love and tenderness
Lie folded in his close embrace.

This is my soul's last hour — I fling
  All Heaven away, as some spoiled glove,
  For this one golden dream of love.
Not the calm Christ nor saints that wing
Their way through Paradise may bring
  The power to stay me. Hark! I hear
  Laughter and steps draw near, more near —
He comes! he comes! The King! the King!

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